

May 1, 2009

MDCH Laboratory Swine Flu Update - #4

Dear Laboratory Colleagues:

We are seeing a steep increase in the number of samples submitted for testing and have responded by assigning additional laboratory scientists to this assay resulting in two runs per day. Results of a day's testing will be entered into our LIS as soon as complete; please tell anxious physicians phone calls will delay entry of these results. We expect to introduce a new swine flu A specific PCR assay from CDC by the middle of next week. This will allow us to issue confirmed reports of swine influenza without having to send specimens on to CDC.

We understand clinical as well as public health laboratories are experiencing difficulties in obtaining VTM. We are working to validate sterile physiologic saline/PBS as an alternative transport. We will also have VTM made and validated here at the BOL ready for shipping next week. Orders for supplies of this transport (order as **BOL VTM**) to use for swine flu testing only should be faxed to: 517-335-9039. In the meantime, if you have no VTM, we'd suggest using 2 ml of one of these alternatives in a sterile tube. NP viral swab transport units may be used also, but we cannot accept swabs in any form of bacterial culture transport. Handle as you would VTM.

This is the schedule for weekend delivery and testing: Specimens being transported by private courier must reach us by 10:00 AM to assure they will go on the run Saturday. We have normal deliveries from FedEx, UPS and USPS Express Mail in the morning on Saturdays and we hope to accommodate all the samples in our Saturday testing, which will be reported out Sunday after noon. The only samples we receive on Sunday are those from private couriers; we will test samples received at the BOL by 10:00 AM Sunday, and report out on Monday.

CDC has indicated there may be a change in the way testing is directed when a certain prevalence is established in a region but local health department approval will still required for the foreseeable future. Testing is greatly expedited if the name of the health department staff who approved testing and the date of approval is entered on the requisition in the outbreak identifier box on the lower left corner of the test requisition. We will communicate any changes as soon as we learn of them. Meanwhile, we continue our sincere appreciation of your efforts. We are grateful for the support clinical as well as reference/commercial laboratories in the state and nationwide have been providing, assuring specimens for confirmation follow the prescribed public health route. We recognize the follow-up required with the requesting physicians is time-consuming for laboratories already working without sufficient staff and resources.

Please email your questions/concerns on flu testing to Dr. Anthony Muyombwe (muyombwea@michigan.gov) or Patty Clark (clarkp@michigan.gov). Issues with supplies can be directed to Val Reed (reedv@michigan.gov) or Marty Boehme (boehmem@michigan.gov).